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TITLE: IRAQ: Political Affairs - Internal

BAATH PARTY

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~~E~~ Mr Montgomery 17/2
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(1016/1/67)

BRITISH EMBASSY,
BAGHDAD.

11 February, 1967.

Dear David,

Baath Party of Iraq

My letter 1016/6/66 of 31 December tentatively analysed the split in the Iraqi Baath at that date as a three-way one. This boils down to the "old" Command of so-called moderates under General Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr; the new Damascus-oriented leadership under Ammar al-Rawi and Dr. Muhammad al-Humsi (President of the Economists Association); and an extreme leftist Iraqi-first grouping, acknowledging Ali Salih al-Saadi as leader, and dissolved by fiat from Damascus.

2. According to the sporadically well-informed weekly al-Nasr, and also to a reliable diplomatic source, a conference of "moderate" Baathists was held here in the first half of January. Some 80 members were present under the chairmanship of Lt. General Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr. The following resolutions were passed after two nocturnal sessions:-

- (a) Not to recognise the expulsions of al-Bakr and Salih Mahdi Ammash from the Regional (Iraqi) Party by the National (=International) Command at Damascus (my letter 1016/4/66 of 20 December refers);
- (b) As however both the Commands in Syria were effectively pursuing the struggle against imperialism and Zionism, the Iraqi Baath as a whole should support the Syrian Baath Party generally;
- (c) The first step towards this end was to repair breaches in the Iraqi Party's ranks;
- (d) Lieut. General Salih Mahdi Ammash should pay a follow-up visit to Damascus (his earlier visit preceded that of Rajab Abdul Majid in the third week of November, and was on oil business), to sort out relations with the National Command, in particular the rescinding of expulsions from the Party - (a) above.

3. Ammash is reported to have visited Damascus shortly after the conference.

4. The questions observers are asking themselves now are - will either of the two rival left-wing Baathi Commands here accept the olive branch, if it is real; and if they do, how strong will the reunified Iraqi Baath prove as potential coup-makers? It is too early to answer any of these questions, but I think that the

/Syrian

D. Montgomery, Esq.,
Eastern Department,
Foreign Office,

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Syrian Baath are probably well aware of the activity and apparent popularity of Ammash in middle-grade army circles here. In their eyes, his popularity may compensate for some lack of orthodoxy. It is also well known that he was head of a Baathist/Nationalist anti-Qasimite cell in 1961/2, and that the Deputy Prime Minister, Rajab Abdul Majid, was one of its members, and remains on good terms with Ammash. If Rajab has by now digested the failure of his oil mission to Damascus at the end of November, he would obviously be a first-class lead-in for the Baath to the inner circles of authority here, e.g. the National Defence Council.

5. I should be grateful to know whether Hooky Walker at Damascus heard of Ammash's visit to Damascus in mid-January; or whether anything is known about any attempt to get the mid-December expulsions of leading Iraqi Baathists rescinded. I am also sending copies of this letter to Chanceries at Amman, Beirut, Cairo; to the Consulate-General Basra and to Ann Elwell in Information Research Department at the Foreign Office.

*Yours ever,
Stephen*

(S.L. Egerton)

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CONFIDENTIAL 7 FEB 1967



BRITISH EMBASSY

BAGHDAD.

14 February, 1967.

Dear David,

President Arif on Subversion

The President since his return from Cairo on 7 February has been tilting against subversive activists here with barely concealed vehemence.

2. In a speech delivered on the 4th Anniversary of the 14 Ramadhan Revolution (8 February) he said:

The Socialist Union will be a protective shield against all intruding doctrines and against the imperialist and reactionary agents who have never ceased attacking the sound course of our revolution.....

Let those who were permitted to come home from outside Iraq realise that this step taken by us was not taken out of weakness. We adopted this step because we wanted to realise unity of rank in the interests of our country and nation. We have come to feel that those who were permitted to return started contacting certain unstable elements whom the liberation movements and the Iraqi people have disowned. These elements were branded with treason for their betrayal of the 14 July, 14 Ramadhan and 18 November Revolutions.

It is better for these elements to prove themselves good citizens, having faith in their homeland and giving up their contacts with their foreign masters. Otherwise they will be cast into prison, for they are merely harmful microbes who want to destroy the interests of our people".

3. Some maintain that the foregoing warning applies specifically to the former Minister of Education, Khalil Kanna (Personality No. 129 of 1960), who is looked up to as a potential leader of various right wing elements here. He returned from exile in Beirut, with the Government's consent, in early January but he can hardly be the sole, or even the main, target of so specific an attack.

/4.

D. Montgomery, Esq.,
Eastern Department,
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London, S.W.1.

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4. At the opening of the Sixth Conference of the Iraq Teachers' Union on 13 February, President Arif repeated three times, with the greatest emphasis of which his toneless voice is capable:

"Freedom, Socialism and Unity [the official slogan of Baath parties everywhere] are the monopoly of no-one. They represent the goals of sincere national and nationalist forces, which must come forward to act together and eschew personal rivalries....National unity is our driving force along the road to our objectives".

5. Taken together, these strictures are seen as a warning mainly to left-wing Baathist elements here, who have been exhorted on Damascus Radio to take the law into their own hands and put pressure on the I.P.C. "to solve the oil crisis." The President's words could scarcely be more emphatic; let us hope they are noted in Damascus.

6. I am sending copies of this letter to Chanceries at Cairo, Beirut, Amman, Damascus, Washington; and to the Consulate General, Basra.

Yours ever

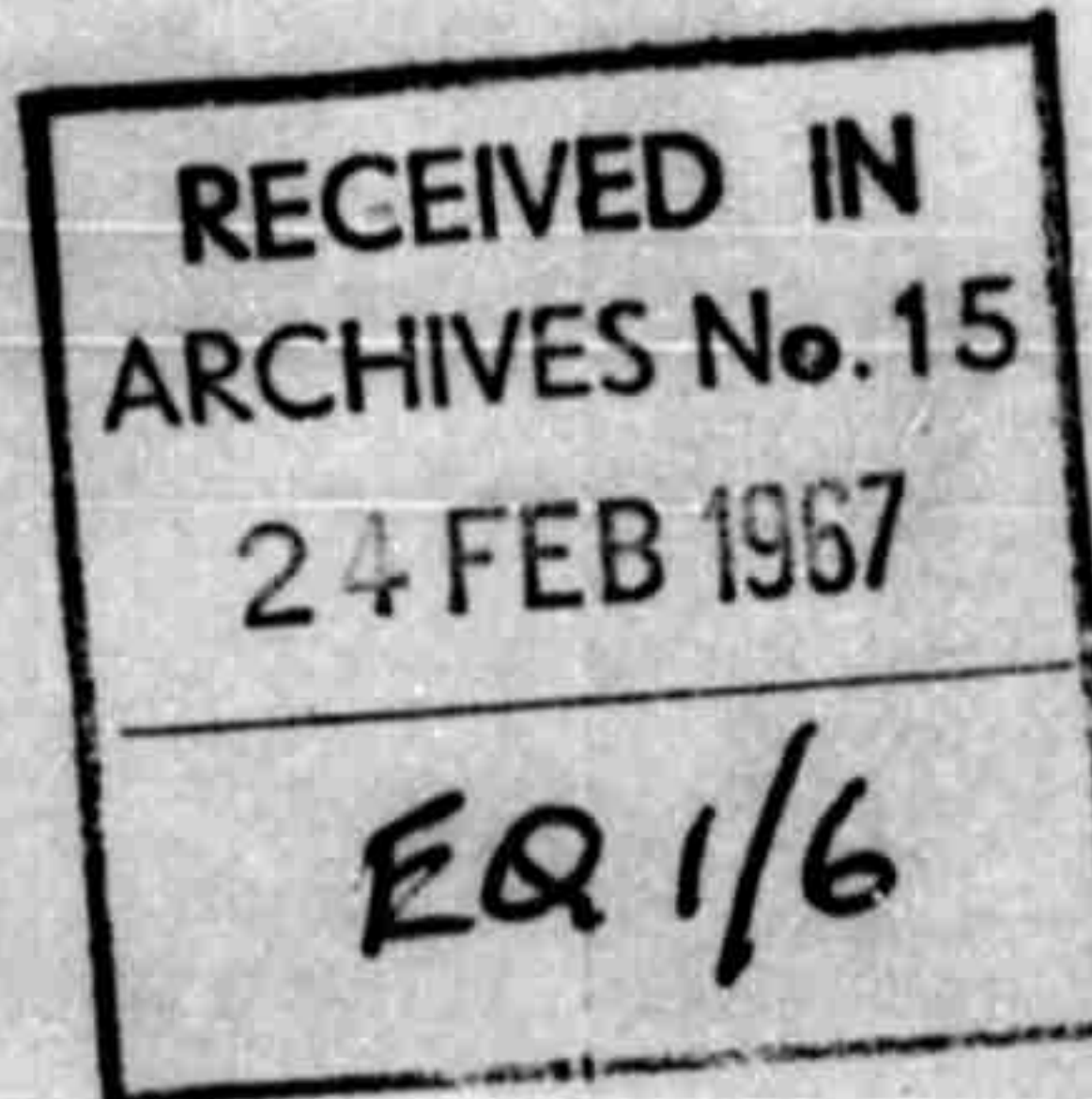
Stephen

(S. L. Egerton)

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1074/67



MR S. Walker
then P.A. Reg

BRITISH EMBASSY

DAMASCUS

21 February, 1967

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Ba'th Party of Iraq

Please refer to your letter 1016/1/67 of 11 February about the present state of the Iraqi Ba'th Party.

2. I am afraid that in Damascus it is exceedingly difficult by normal diplomatic means to find out very much about the internal goings on of the Ba'th. All I can say in answer to your questions (paragraph 5 of your letter) is that the No. 2 in the Saudi Embassy here assures me that Salih Mahdi Amash did visit Damascus in mid-January; he also says that the Amash-Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr section of the Ba'th Party in Iraq enjoys considerable popularity there.

3. I am sending a copy of this letter to David Montgomery in Eastern Department.

(H. B. Walker)

S. L. Egerton, Esq.,
British Embassy,
Baghdad.

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1074/67

BRITISH EMBASSY

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21 February, 1967

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(H. B. Walker)

S. L. Egerton, Esq.,
British Embassy,
Baghdad.

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BBC MON 2200

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B46 IRAQI BAATHIST TO RETURN HOME FROM SYRIA

(CRNS, BEIRUT) DAMASCUS: AIR LT.-COL. MUNDHIR AL-WINDAWI,
AN IRAQI POLITICAL REFUGEE WHO HAS BEEN LIVING IN SYRIA

FOR SOME TIME

AL-WINDAWI MET PRESIDENT ARIF DURING HIS VISIT TO
DAMASCUS LAST MONTH. ARIF PROMISED TO CANCEL THE DEATH
SENTENCE AGAINST AL-WINDAWI AND TO ALLOW HIM TO RETURN HOME.

MF BBC MON 2203 9/9 RT

B46 RETURN 2

AL-WINDAWI, WHO IS A MEMBER OF THE SOCIALIST ARAB BAATH PARTY,
TOOK PART IN THE 14TH JULY 1958 REVOLUTION WHICH OVERTHREW
THE MONARCHY. HE WAS SENTENCED TO DEATH IN ABSENTIA AFTER
BOMBING THE IRAQI DEFENCE MINISTRY BUILDING IN THE 18TH
NOVEMBER 1963 MOVEMENT LED BY THE LATE PRESIDENT ABD AL-SALAM ARIF,
WHICH PUT AN END TO BAATHIST RULE IN IRAQ. AL-WINDAWI WORKED
WITH THE SYRIAN AIR FORCE IN THE RECENT WAR AGAINST ISRAEL.

END BBC MON 2205 9/9 RT (KY)

(4)

Mr. Montgomery
Reg (Baath Party)
12/9
11/9



E. Diw - Baath Party.

AL-MANAR:

Reports the return to Baghdad from Cairo, yesterday afternoon, by air of Sayyid Ali Salih Al-Sa'di consequent on the amnesty granted him. He was accompanied by his wife.

Sayyid Sa'di had taken refuge in the United Arab Republic in the beginning of this year where he lived as a political refugee.

Sayyid Sa'di declined to make any statement to the correspondent of this paper at the Airport and said that that was not possible at present.

Baghdad Airport was opened yesterday to all directions. Iraqi Airways have resumed their regular flights to Cairo, through Saudi Arabia, from to-day (Friday), at the rate of three flights per week, namely, Fridays, Sundays and Wednesdays.

/The Chancellery....

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Mr. Makins
15/10

WITH THE COMPLIMENTS

OF

THE CHANCERY

(J.L.Y. Sanders)

Ry & ps

15/10

1 OCT 1968

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Eastern Department,
FOREIGN OFFICE.

11 October, 1968.

BRITISH EMBASSY,
BEIRUT.

Today's Main News And Trends, Cont'dCopy to Baghdad
E. S. S. S.

Iraq

2
4/10BAATHIST FOLLOWERS OF SYRIAN REGIME SAID INVOLVED IN ABORTIVE COUP ATTEMPT IN IRAQ

Baathist followers of the Syrian regime were reported today to have been involved in the abortive coup attempt uncovered in Iraq last month. According to Beirut's weekly AL SAYYAD, which is close to the Iraqi regime, the pro-Damascus Baathists had been keeping close association with Brigadier (rtd) Abdel Hadi Rawi, alleged leader of the abortive attempt. The story said also that the regime had managed to plant an agent inside the grouping combining Rawi and the pro-Syria Baathists. The authorities, therefore, knew the group's plans before they were executed.

It will be recalled that the Baathists in power in Iraq are followers of the old Pan-Arab Command of the Baath Party, which was ousted from power in Damascus in February, 1966, by a radical Baathist faction which now rules in Syria. AL SAYYAD's story said that pro-Syrian Baathists in Iraq were active soon after the orthodox Baathists seized power in Baghdad last July 17th. It was then that they began their association with Brigadier Rawi, the story said, adding that investigations with the arrested men have shown that "a regime in a neighbouring Arab country" had had a hand in the abortive attempt.

AL SAYYAD said that shortly after the foiling of the coup attempt in Iraq, reports were circulated by certain quarters of an attempted coup in Syria against the present regime. The weekly expressed the belief that such reports were deliberately circulated in order to cover up the alleged role of the Syrian regime in the Iraqi abortive attempt.

Kurds. In another story, AL SAYYAD said that Fuad Rikabi, leader of the Arab Socialist Movement in Iraq (see our bulletin yesterday) may become the editor of a new newspaper to be published in Baghdad by Jalal Talabani, a Kurdish leader and rival to Mulla Mustafa Barzani, the Kurdish nationalist leader. The weekly said that Talabani has already acquired a license to publish his newspaper (which was said to aim at countering the Barzani newspaper, AL TAAKHI, also published in Baghdad).

AL TAAKHI, said to have been suspended last week, appeared to have resumed publication. Beirut's AL HAYAT today reproduced excerpts from an editorial in AL TAAKHI again stressing the need for finding an adequate settlement to the Kurdish problem in Iraq.

LEBANON AND IRAQ. AP from Baghdad reproduced a story which appeared in Baghdad's semi-official AL THAWRA yesterday to the effect that it is possible Iraq may transfer its transit trade from Lebanon to Syria. The paper said that this has been requested by several economic organizations in Iraq. The Baghdad daily added that the Minister of Economy has now formed a committee of technicians to prepare a comprehensive study of the Iraqi transit trade via Beirut. The report would list the benefits Iraq would reap if it switches this trade to the Syrian port of Tartous on the Mediterranean.

INOC DIRECTOR CONFIRMED. The Iraqi official gazette yesterday published a decree confirming the appointment of Dr Abdullah Al Sayyab as Director of the Iraq National Oil Company (INOC), according to a dispatch from Baghdad by MEN, the UAR official news agency.

Dr Al Sayyab's appointment had been announced earlier. He replaces Adib Al Jader, who was relieved as INOC Director after the coup in Baghdad last July which ousted the regime of ex-President Abdel Rahman Aref. Jader is said to be still under arrest. Sayyab also replaced Jader as Iraq's Governor at the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

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copy to Hafid
E. D. M.

REPUBLIC OF IRAQ**PRO-SYRIA BAATHISTS IN IRAQ RAPPED FOR BID TO DIVIDE BETWEEN REGIME, OTHER ELEMENTS**

Regime

The pro-Syrian Baathists in Iraq have been bitterly criticized for their alleged attempts to "blow up" contacts between the ruling Baathist regime and other progressive elements in the country. The criticism came from Fuad Rikabi, described as leader of the Arab Socialist Movement, said to comprise the Arab Nationalist Movement and other Nasserite elements in Iraq. In a statement, published in Beirut's pro-UAR weekly AL SAYYAD yesterday, Rikabi accused the pro-Syrian Baathists of issuing clandestine leaflets attacking the present regime in Iraq and claiming that their views were similar to those of the communists and the Arab Socialist Movement.

Regime's Role. Rikabi was also reported by AL SAYYAD as saying that he would suggest that the present regime in Iraq should question the Arab Socialist Movement on whatever statements it issues not on what is attributed to it by other quarters. He added that he in fact had told one of the pro-Syrian Baathists in Iraq to abandon this method of involving other progressive groups in disputes with the regime. Rikabi also pointed out that the Arab Socialist Movement itself is split into Marxist and non-Marxist elements.

[It will be recalled that most of the ruling personalities of the present regime in Iraq were members of the old pan-Arab Command of the Baath Party, ousted from power in Syria by the present Syrian Baathist rulers in a coup d'etat on February 23rd, 1966. Hence, the uneasy quiet between the two Baathist regimes in the two neighboring countries.]

Talks with Communists. In the same statement, Rikabi was reported as saying that the new regime in Iraq, which came to power in a bloodless coup last July 17th, was continuing its contacts with the progressive forces in Iraq in accordance with the regime's policy of "openness." He added, however, that the regime's contacts have so far been confined to the Iraqi communists of the pro-Moscow Central Committee. The communists' response to these approaches "has been reserved and limited," according to Rikabi. He said these communists still consider that the February 8th, 1963, revolution, which toppled the regime of the late Iraqi strongman Gen. Abdul Karim Kassim, as "a revisionist movement." The leaders of that revolution included the same Baathists who now in control in Iraq. The communists, under the short-lived Baath regime in the early months of 1963, had been greatly persecuted. Hence, their distrust of the present Baathist regime. According to AL SAYYAD, these communists insist that the present regime should agree with them that the February 8th, 1963, movement was "a revisionist one" before any agreement for cooperation could be reached.

Progressive Front. The Beirut weekly went on to say that Rikabi was agreed with the opinion of Jalal Talabani, the rival adversary of Kurdish leader Mulla Mustafa Barazani, regarding the formation of a progressive front to consist, in the initial stage, of the old pan-Arab Baath Party Command, the Central Committee Communists, the Kurdish Democratic Party (or Talabani and Ibrahim Ahmed), and the Arab Socialist Movement.

AL SAYYAD reported Rikabi as saying that this front would be able to attract to it other progressive elements. He added that the forces which are proposed for the new front have views and ideologies much too close to those of the ruling Baath Party in Iraq and, therefore, cooperation amongst them could be expected to last.

(LAST PAPER)

Mr. Mark. ...



Agm
..... 15/6

With the compliments of

(J.L.Y. Sanders)

Reg 8 pa

**Eastern Department,
Foreign Office**
BRITISH EMBASSY

BEIRUT OCT 1908

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Dr
16/10

Internal Iraqi Political Affairs - Ba'ath Party. Baath Party. 4 Oct. 1968. MS Middle East Online: Iraq, 1914-1974: Selected files from series AIR, CAB, CO, FCO, FO, PREM, T, WO, The National Archives, Kew, UK FCO 17/410. The National Archives (Kew, United Kingdom). Archives Unbound, link.gale.com/apps/doc/SC5107473655/GDSC?u=webdemo&sid=bookmark-GDSC&xid=dcdb0686&pg=1. Accessed 11 Apr. 2022.